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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

TWENTY INDICTED IN OPERATION MONEY CLIP

PRESS RELEASE

Susan W. Brooks, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Indiana announced today in a press conference with Dennis Wichern, Assistant Special Agent in Charge, Drug Enforcement Administration, Michelle Mangold, Resident Agent in Charge, Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Michael Spears, Chief, Indianapolis Police Department, and Paul Whitesell, Superintendent, Indiana State Police, the indictment of seventeen cocaine traffickers by a federal grand jury for conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute and to distribute over five kilograms of cocaine and one defendant for accessory after the fact by hindering the apprehension of one cocaine trafficker. The indictment was the result of a national investigation entitled "**Operation Money Clip**," a multi-jurisdictional, multi-agency Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) investigation that targeted and dismantled international money laundering and drug trafficking organizations around the country. The current indictment is the result of an investigation by the Indianapolis and Chicago

offices of the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Indianapolis and Chicago offices of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Indianapolis Police Department and the Indiana State Police.

Nationally, since October 2003, under 43 investigations, “**Operation Money Clip**” has resulted in the arrests of 83 defendants and 26 separate seizures for a total of \$4.4 Million Dollars, 2,526 kilograms of cocaine, 74 pounds of crystallized methamphetamine or ICE, 2.8 pounds of methemaphetamine, 39,265 pounds of marijuana and 1 kilogram of heroin. **Operation Money Clip** was initiated in response to DEA Administrator Karen Tandy’s Bulk Currency Initiative, which targets drug organizations’ abilities, methods, and routes to smuggle large amounts of U.S. currency from the United States to Mexico and other foreign countries. Administrator Tandy said about **Operation Money Clip** “By getting to the root of the sophisticated criminal organization, we have taken away their profits, their drugs and their key leadership. This operation ensures that these drug traffickers will never do business on American streets again, and proves that in order to defeat these large criminal organizations, law enforcement must be coordinated and united.”

Susan Brooks, United States Attorney stated “The latest successful investigation in **Operation Money Clip** has resulted in the seizures of 44 kilograms of cocaine and nearly a half million dollars in cash and assets. More importantly twenty more individuals have been taken off the streets that were a primary source of cocaine for Central Indiana with sources directly in Mexico. We have dismantled the Indianapolis-Chicago cell of a Mexican cartel that has been operating in the streets of Indianapolis for the last two years.”

The indictment charges the following individuals with conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute and to distribute five kilograms or more of cocaine:

Juan Carlos Bermudez, Mexico, Chicago and California, in custody initial hearing today at 3:00 p.m.

Javier Rodriguez, 36, Indianapolis, in custody

Jose Calderon, 33, Indianapolis, in custody
Luis Correa, age unknown, Southern California/Mexico, fugitive
Jose Alfredo Amaral-Estrada, 25, Chicago, in custody
Veronica Avila, 31, Southern California, in custody
Jose Iribe, 24, Mexico, in custody
Leon Anderson, 32, Indianapolis, in custody
Charles Anderson, 34, Indianapolis, in custody
Andres Butron, 32, Chicago, in custody
Jose Zavala, 21, Indianapolis/Mexico, fugitive
Freddy Adan Sosa-Verdeja, 26, Chicago/Mexico, fugitive
Evarardo Lira-Esquivel, 40, Chicago, in custody
Darrell Phillips, 33, Indianapolis, fugitive
Willie Powell, 34, Indianapolis, fugitive
Robert Miller, 39, Indianapolis, fugitive
Eddie Cunningham, 32, Indianapolis, fugitive

The indictment alleges that in October 2003, Chicago ICE seized over 1.1 million dollars, 5 kilograms of cocaine. The ICE and subsequent DEA investigation identified Juan Carlos Bermudez as the manager for Mexican Cartels which distributed cocaine and marijuana in the Midwest. Further investigation by DEA identified Mexican national Javier Rodriguez, aka Ramon Tellez, as a major distributor working for Bermudez and Correa, a southern California source of cocaine in Indianapolis.

In July 2004, the Indiana State Police highway interdiction units seized \$107,000 and 10 kilograms of cocaine in two separate traffic stops. It was determined that these seizures were linked to the Bermudez/Tellez organization operating in Indianapolis. The indictment alleges that during a four month period in 2004, the organization smuggled in excess of sixty (60) kilograms of cocaine to Indianapolis. The approximate street value of uncut cocaine would be \$6.6 million returning to the source of supply in Mexico.

In February 2005, ICE border investigators stopped Jose Iribre coming across the Mexico/Texas border, who was delivering cocaine obtained from Bermudez to Rodriguez in Indianapolis. Leon Anderson was one of the primary customers of kilogram quantities of cocaine obtained from Rodriguez in Indianapolis. The indictment alleges that Anderson stored drugs and cash at a stash house located at 1306/1308 Tecumseh Street, Indianapolis. After the execution in March, 2005 of four federal search warrants at the following locations, 365 Catherwood, Indianapolis, 6143 Oak Street, Indianapolis and 1306 and 1308 Tecumseh, Indianapolis, stash houses used by Rodriguez, Calderon and Anderson, 14 kilograms of cocaine, \$60,000 currency, 4 weapons and 6 vehicles were seized as a result of these searches. In May, 2005 DEA agents from Indianapolis and Chicago recovered an additional 12 kilograms of cocaine and \$275,000 and arrested Amaral-Estrada and Lira-Esquivel in Chicago. Agents also recovered approximately 300 empty kilogram wrappings that had previously contained cocaine.

In a separate preceding indictment, two other individuals were also charged for their roles in the drug distribution conspiracy, namely, Kenneth Davenport, 29, Indianapolis, in custody, and Maria Garnica, 49, Southern California, in custody.

"Drug trafficking enterprises are motivated by greed and characterized by violence, said Elissa A. Brown, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement office. "ICE will continue partnering with law enforcement to dismantle international criminal networks that threaten public safety with their drug smuggling and money laundering activities. With today's indictments we are helping to make our communities a little safer." Dennis Wichern, Assistant Special Agent in Charge of DEA, said "Drug traffickers continue to plague our communities, however, in partnership with state and local law enforcement, the Drug Enforcement Administration will continue to bring to justice those who threaten our communities."

According to Assistant United States Attorneys Joshua Minkler and John Dowd, who are prosecuting the case for the government, all defendants except Zavala-Gutierrez, if convicted, face a maximum possible sentence of life imprisonment and a

maximum possible fine of \$4,000,000. Zavala-Gutierrez faces a maximum possible sentence of fifteen years and maximum possible fine of \$2,000,000.

If individuals have information leading to the whereabouts of the fugitives listed, they should call DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration) at (317) 226-7977.

An indictment is an allegation only, and all defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty at trial or by guilty plea.

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